

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why is the Great Dismal Swamp NWR hosting a bear hunt?**

The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The laws and policies that govern management of national wildlife refuges support hunting as an appropriate priority public use, as well as a wildlife management tool. Specifically, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 spells out six priority public uses to be facilitated on units of the national wildlife refuge system, among them hunting.

The refuge developed the bear hunt based upon interest expressed by the public and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. After review of two black bear studies conducted on the refuge, consultation with states wildlife agencies and bear experts, the refuge proposed a bear hunt as part of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). After public comment and more discussion, a regulated bear hunt was designed that will not have an adverse impact on the bear population in the area.

### **Did the public have an opportunity to comment on the bear hunt?**

Yes, the public had the opportunity to comment on the refuge's proposed bear hunt. When the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment was released in March, 2006, the public had 43 days to provide input. The refuge hosted three workshops to present the plan to the public. The public was notified of these workshops via mailings, information in the local newspapers, and on the refuge's Website. The public also had an opportunity to guide the development of the CCP and accompanying documents during the scoping period, for which public comment was sought through public meetings and a public comment period in 2002.

### **Will hunters be allowed to use dogs or bait to hunt the bears?**

The use of dogs and bait for hunting is strictly prohibited on the refuge. Hunters will not be able to use or even possess dogs while hunting on the refuge, nor will they be allowed to use bait - two traditional means of hunting bears. Refuge law enforcement officers will patrol to ensure compliance with these restrictions.

### **Will hunters be allowed to shoot female bears that have cubs, or cubs?**

State law prohibits hunters from shooting female bears in the company of cubs, or bears that weigh less than 100 pounds. Female bears with cubs will most often have the cubs with them. Holding the hunt in late autumn helps to reduce the likelihood that female bears will be taken since pregnant bears are usually denning at this time of year.

### **Why can't hunters use rifles?**

Hunting with rifles is not allowed in this part of Suffolk and Chesapeake, Virginia, by city ordinances. The refuge bear hunt is shotgun only.

**How were hunters selected?**

Based on our evaluation of the best scientific information available, we determined that no more than a maximum of 100 hunters would be provided an opportunity to hunt bear at the refuge during the limited season. Applications were taken from all interested hunters from September 11 to October 6, 2006. We received 349 applications. All of the applications were entered in a computer database and numbered. A number generator was employed to randomly select 100 numbers. The numbers were then matched to the names of successful applicants. Although 100 applicants were successful in the lottery, only 58 of them sent in the required permitting fee. As such, only those 58 hunters will be eligible to hunt bear at the refuge.